

Moss



Wood

Newsletter

No.1

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New Releases: The 1986 Wooded Whites

This newsletter announces the release of the 1986 Moss Wood Chardonnay and the 1986 Moss Wood wood matured Semillon. It also includes overviews of how these wine styles have evolved at Moss Wood over the years and information about the winery.

The Semillon is the same wine as the 1986 Semillon, released last September, with four month's aging in oak casks.

1986 Moss Wood wood matured Semillon

The wine has a strong floral bouquet, neatly balanced with attractive oak. On the palate, the Semillon has excellent herbaceous fruit and plenty of acid. The oak treatment has produced a wine with a firm structure in which the fruit and oak are perfectly balanced. The wine has loads of flavour and good length.

The 1986 wood matured Semillon can be enjoyed, slightly chilled, now or can be cellared for up to seven years.

It is priced at \$10 per bottle or \$120 per dozen.

1986 Moss Wood Chardonnay

The Chardonnay has an intense bouquet with overtones of tropical fruit, peaches and apricot. Its time in wood has added depth and complexity, as well as a pleasant, charred oak quality, to the excellent fruit characters. On the palate, the Chardonnay has a softness which is balanced by the wine's firm structure, rich, complex fruit flavours and tremendous length.

It is an elegant wine that could be drunk young for its soft, mouth-filling fruit flavours. It will, however, repay up to ten years cellaring by developing even greater complexity and depth of fruit flavour.

The 1986 Chardonnay is richer, higher in alcohol with riper fruit than either the 1985 or the 1983. It is similar to the 1984 but is a more delicate wine.

Price per bottle is \$13 or \$156 per dozen.



The Moss Wood Chardonnays

Moss Wood made its first chardonnay vintage in 1980, with about a ton and a quarter of grapes being picked. Because such a small amount was made, the vintage was treated as an experimental one, and the Chardonnay was entered in shows and used as an advertising piece. It was fermented half in stainless steel and half in barrels, fined, filtered and aged in oak casks for nine months.

In attempting to make as rich a wine as possible, Bill Pannell and Keith Mugford produced a big, round style with tremendous fruit character. Robin Bradley, in his book *Small Wineries of Australia*, is unstinting in his praise of this wine. He refers to it as

a wine of staggering merit. The colour is rich straw, and it is as limpid as a trout-stream; the nose has all the obvious peach / fig / apricot / components expected of the variety, but also contains complex smoky undertones of very great beauty; the palate is gently overwhelming: sweet without sugar, tight without austerity, crisp without sharpness. Unbelievable.

In spite of the success of this vintage, it was not until 1983 that another chardonnay was made at Moss Wood as the 1981 crop was wiped out by strong winds and that of 1982 by frost. (Such is the lot of wine makers!)

The 1983 chardonnay was picked earlier than the 1980 and consequently had a lower alcohol content. Fermentation was begun in refrigerated stainless steel vats, which enabled the winemakers to control temperature and therefore the speed of fermentation. At the half way stage, the wine was transferred to oak barrels to finish the process.

After fermentation, the wine was left to settle on its lees (sediment) for four weeks. It was then cleaned up and placed in oak for four months before bottling.

The result, by comparison with the 1980, was a much finer, more stylish wine with superb, fresh chardonnay fruit in balance with the gentle oak.

For the 1984 vintage, Keith Mugford decided to make only one major change to the winemaking techniques. After fermentation, the wine was left on its yeast lees in casks for nine months. Experience with this and subsequent vintages has shown that, although the wine hardly ages at all during this period, the fruit, oak and yeast characters integrate to make a more complex wine.

The 1984 Chardonnay is a more complex wine than the previous vintage with more weight, depth and more of the classic features of white Burgundy.

For the next vintage, the time that the wine spent on its lees in barrel was increased from nine to twelve months. This longer period in oak has become standard practice with chardonnay at Moss Wood. Keith Mugford was delighted with just how much the clarification process improved this wine after it had had such a long time in cask. The 1985 Chardonnay has similar characters to the 1984, but is finer than the previous wine.

The time at which the grapes are picked produces major differences in the style of various vintages of Moss Wood Chardonnays. The problem for the winemaker arises because the riper the grapes are when they are picked the higher the level of alcohol and the lower the wine's acidity. The style of a particular vintage will be influenced by the decisions the winemaker makes about achieving a balance between the acidity levels and other aspects of the wine's character, such as its fruit flavour.

The 1980, 1984 and 1985 vintages were picked later than the others and the resultant wines are bigger, rounder with complex fruit characters. On the other hand, the 1983 and 1985 Chardonnays are less ripe, more delicate, stylish wines.

The Kensington Wine Fair: The Place to Be

In a recent article in the *West Australian* (February 25, 1987) a British wine salesman, Ian Gerard-Pearse urged Australian wine producers to stay away from the Bristol Wine Fair and said that "the London wine fair in May was the place to be." He commented that this was "rapidly becoming one of the wine events of the world."

It won't surprise lovers of Margaret River wines to learn that the owners of Moss Wood, Keith and Clare Mugford, will be presenting their wines at the Kensington Wine Fair. This major event on the British wine calendar is only open to the trade and will attract most of the key people of the United Kingdom and European wine industries.

Keith describes the three day Fair as "like a giant negotiant's office", at which members of the trade can taste samples of wines and discuss the wines with winemakers and their representatives.

Moss Wood wines available for tasting will include: the 1985 Cabernet, 1985 Pinot Noir, 1986 Chardonnay and the 1986 Wood Matured Semillon. Running the stall

will be Peter Diplock who handles Moss Wood wines in the United Kingdom. A publisher by trade, Peter has found an outlet for his love of Australian wines in developing a small importing business. He has been a major factor behind the successful sales of Moss Wood wines in the British market.

Keith and Clare see the venture as important in consolidating Moss Wood's reputation and position in the overseas market place rather than leading to a significant increase in sales. They believe that if producers discuss their philosophy of and approach to winemaking with buyers, the latter will be better able to recommend the producer's wines with confidence.

As well as this, Keith and Clare see the possibility of exposure to the British journalists, many of whom have influence world-wide, as an important reason for being at the Kensington Wine Fair.

They will combine the trip to London with a three week working visit to Bordeaux and Burgundy to study winemaking and viticulture in these regions.

Wine fit for a Queen: Moss Wood wood-matured Semillon

When wine writer and consultant, Alan Young was preparing the wine list for the State Dinner during the Queen's Jubilee visit to Western Australia in 1977, he remembered tasting a semillon which Bill Pannell had offered him from cask on a visit to the winery. His phone call asking Bill for stocks of the wine to serve to the Queen led to the wine's only official outing as the 1976 semillon, from the first crop produced at Moss Wood, was not released commercially.

Winemaker, Bill Pannell, while delighted with the wine's showing at Government House, was unable to produce another wood matured semillon until six years later because of the lack of available grapes. A small amount of the 1982 vintage was given eight months in cask in an attempt to produce a heavily oaked semillon. As a result of this trial, it was decided to produce half of the 1983 Semillon as a wood matured style. Cask tests with the previous wine had indicated that the wine was in its neatest balance after three months in oak and so this amount of aging has become standard practice since the 1983 vintage.

The favourable public reaction to the first commercial release of the wood matured Semillon has ensured this style a permanent place in the Moss Wood range. Each year since, half the semillon crop has been released as a straight Semillon in the September after vintage and half as a wood matured style in March or April of the following year.

Initially, people were more supportive of the style when they tasted it blind although, with a greater public acceptance of semillon, that seems to be changing. The fact that so many experienced wine drinkers have mistaken the Moss Wood wood matured semillon for chardonnay may indicate how much we associate wood treatment with fruit character.

For many people, the wood aging process builds background and complexity, tightens the structure and tends to **complete** the wine. In making this wine in a quite straight forward way, Keith Mugford is determined to preserve fruit flavour at all costs.

Keith Mugford - Winemaker

Growing up in the McLaren Vale played a major part in Keith Mugford deciding to devote his life to the wine industry. A move from Adelaide to the Vale not only changed his parents from beer drinkers into enthusiastic wine consumers but it also ensured that Keith grew up in an area where wine production was the most important industry. One of his best friends at school was John Hardy, now at Middlebrook, and his family's circle of friends included those involved in winemaking at Seaview, Genders, Daringa and Maxwell Wines.

His decision to study oenology at Roseworthy College was hardly surprising in view of such an upbringing. He was at Roseworthy from 1976 until 1978 and during that time did vintages at Tulloch's, in the Hunter Valley (1977), and at Orlando, in the Barossa (1978).

While at Roseworthy, Keith studied with Scott Collett, who is now making some outstanding wines for Woodstock in the McLaren Vale, Jeff Clarke, now winemaker at Tisdall in Victoria, and John Cassegrain, whose winery in the Hastings Valley has made a significant impact in little over a year of operation and has just been awarded a trophy for best small producer from N.S.W. at the Sydney Wine Show.

It was during his time at Roseworthy that Keith first learnt of the potential of the Western Australian cool climate areas for making outstanding table wines. John Elliott, from the Western Australian Agriculture Department, and Michael Peterkin, from Pierro, were both at Roseworthy at the time and Keith tasted his first memorable West Australian wine - the 1977 Moss Wood Semillon - in their company. He thought it a fantastic wine and made a mental note of the winemaker's name.

Just before finishing his training, Keith wrote to several winemakers seeking employment. Although unable to find him a position at Valencia, Bill Hardy

informed Keith that Bill Pannell had just written asking if he knew of a suitable winemaker to help him at Moss Wood. That was a chance the Roseworthy graduate leapt at.

Before starting at Moss Wood, in 1979, Keith visited the United States for six weeks spending time in the Napa Valley at Mondavi, Spring Mountain and Stag's Leap.

Keith learnt much from Bill Pannell in the five vintages before the latter decided to step down from winemaking. 1984 was a turning point in Keith Mugford's life not only because he took over at Moss Wood, but also because Clare and he were married that year.

As you would expect, Keith is a keen student of wine. He assesses each wine on its merits, attempting to understand what made it the wine it is. He has no preference for any particular wine or style of wine, though he does admit to being fascinated by the elusive pinot noir and chardonnay at its most complex. Of the Moss Wood wines that he has been associated with, Keith considers the 1981 Pinot the benchmark. He does say, however, that there are some things about each of the wines he has made that he is pleased with and has learned from. His attitude to Moss Wood tells us something about Keith Mugford. He sees the wine almost as a third person, a separate identity apart from Clare and himself. When the wine is praised, he sees this as not so much a personal triumph but as a success for the wine, for the land, for Moss Wood.

For the future, Keith hopes that Moss Wood can maintain the respect of the world of wine and the profile it has built up in little more than a decade consistently producing fine wines. With a winemaker of his calibre in charge, this is an eminently achievable aim.

Quite Right, James!

We have to agree with wine columnist, James Halliday, when he commented in the *Australian Gourmet* of February 1987, that Brian Croser and Martin Shaw have produced an excellent wine list for their first class Petaluma Restaurant at Bridgewater Mill in the Adelaide Hills. There are four cabernets on the list and these include two vintages of Petaluma and the 1984 Moss Wood Cabernet.

The Petaluma Restaurant is well worth the thirty minute excursion into the Hills. The food is innovative, superbly presented and quite delicious, the decor is attractive and the service professional. If you choose not to afford some of the excellent old Bordeaux or Burgundies from the museum wine list, you will be able to enjoy an elegant, young Margaret River cabernet.

Moss Wood Winery



□ Located on Metricup Road
Wilyabrup
Western Australia

From Keith and Clare

The Newsletter

We have decided to change the format of our new releases letter to provide you with more information about our wines and the vineyard than has been possible in the past. We hope you like the new format and find it informative.

By Appointment Only

Those of you who have visited the Margaret River area may have looked in vain, for a signpost showing the way to the Moss Wood Winery. That there is no signpost is part of our attempt to seek relative seclusion. We do not have the volume of wine nor staff to handle cellar door sales adequately.

If we were to encourage visitors on a large scale, we would want to be able to offer any of them who were interested, a thorough and personal look at all aspects of the vineyard. At present we don't have the time to offer such a facility to the general public.

Visits to the winery are by appointment only so that we can give those who are really interested in wine, and are prepared to contact us beforehand, our full attention. We are particularly keen to welcome our mail-order customers to Moss Wood.

There will be some days, at busy times of the year, when it will not be possible for the winery to be open. Knowing something about the hectic life of the vineyard, you will understand that. Don't let all this seem as though we will turn people away if they drop in unannounced. If we can possibly show them our wines or the winery, we will.

What! no order form?

We made a conscious decision in the past not to include an order form with our new release letter because we really enjoyed the short notes, letters and telephone calls from people ordering wine. In particular, we've found that not including an order form has encouraged people to give us feedback about our wines generally or specific bottles they've really enjoyed. And that's been important to us.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Ordering Wine

We are happy to supply mixed dozens but would prefer unbroken cases for safety and ease of handling. Please include the appropriate amount of freight calculated from the table below. Delivery will be made on receipt of payment.

Keith and Claire Mugford

Freight Rates	Perth	Adelaide	Melbourne	Sydney	Brisbane	Canberra	Darwin	Tasmania
1 Case	\$5.15	\$9.70	\$10.75	\$11.95	\$13.00	\$13.00	\$16.90	\$23.90
Each additional case	\$0.55	\$1.70	\$1.70	\$2.20	\$2.80	\$2.80	\$4.30	\$6.00

Insurance \$2.50 per consignment (optional).

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